



# SafeRoutes News

The Safe Routes To Schools Newsletter Fall 2006

## THREE SCHOOL DISTRICTS AWARDED SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS GRANTS

### Infrastructure Grants Will Improve Safety for Children

Students in Corte Madera, Novato and San Rafael can look forward to improved safety and better connectivity as a result of three Caltrans Safe Routes to School grants, announced this past summer. The Caltrans grants, which dedicate highway safety funds to routes to and from schools, are part of an eight-year program designed to improve safety around California schools.

The City of Novato was awarded \$108,000 to

provide school-area warning signs and pavement markings at the seven of its schools that participate in the Transportation Authority of Marin's (TAM) Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) program: Hamilton, Hill, Lu Sutton, Lynwood, Olive, Pleasant Valley, and Rancho.

The signage improvements will reduce confusion around these schools and increase driver awareness. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 7]



**New School  
Guard  
Crossing  
Program  
see page 3**

## A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE...



On the first day of school, 135 students (almost half the school) walked or biked to Manor School in Fairfax thanks to the efforts of a few parents who were determined to make a difference in the world. "After seeing Al Gore's movie 'An Inconvenient Truth,' a group of us were talking about habits we could easily change to make a significant difference," explained Diana Donlon Karlenzig. "We thought that encouraging families to walk and bike to school on the FIRST DAY would help to get the school year off on the right foot, so to speak. The response was great and we encourage other school communities to give it a try." Photo: Diana Donlon Karlenzig

### **Safe Routes to Schools**

A program of the  
Transportation Authority  
of Marin

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## **STREET SMARTS: Are You a Good Driver?**

Most people think that they are. And yet so many of us exceed the speed limit, roll through stop signs, and drive while distracted—talking on the phone, changing the CD, fussing with the baby in the back seat. These behaviors can turn deadly in an instant.

We also see many pedestrians (adults as well as children) wandering across the street without looking, and bicyclists who ride through stop signs. What people lack are Street Smarts.

Our cars are built for comfort and speed, and drivers often forget that they are operating a piece of heavy machinery. There are more than 41,000 deaths on the road nationwide each year, and 5.3 million injuries, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Many parents who drive their children to school cite traffic safety as the reason why they drive. Yet they then become part of the problem as they drive aggressively or while distracted, endangering other people's children and their own.

Most people want to do the right thing, but many need to re-learn what that actually involves. So TAM purchased the award-winning Street Smarts program from the City of San Jose. This innovative program combines focus-group-tested signs and banners with neighborhood and school workshops to encourage everyone to wake up and pay attention while driving, walking or biking.

In the next six months, the Safe Routes to Schools Task Forces will be learning how to use the Street Smarts program. Stay tuned for the official launch. We look forward to joining the City of San Jose in becoming a place where people drive with awareness and safety; where pedestrians really do look before they walk out into the street; and where bicyclists obey the rules of the road. In other words, we'll have Street Smarts!

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## **DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN?**

### **TAM Safe Routes to Schools Assists Communities in Developing Plans**

School Districts in Marin now have the opportunity to participate in the creation of comprehensive plans for reducing congestion and altering student and parent behavior. TAM developed a template for a School Travel Plan, modeled after the successful program instituted by Great Britain.

Travel Plan work will be completed using Task Forces of school district representatives, volunteers from participating schools, and city representatives and staff members, including traffic engineers and law enforcement. The Task Forces will also determine evaluation methods and education and encouragement tactics.

Each Travel Plan will contain information about the participating schools and the route improvements needed to create a safe environment for children to walk and bike to school. [CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE]

**For more information on these programs go to [www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov)**



*New crossing guard at Old Mill school, Mill Valley*

## CROSSING GUARDS PROVIDE PROTECTION

### New Program Launched This Fall

54 crossing guards hit the streets when school started this fall. The funding for the guards comes from Measure A, the half-cent transportation sales tax approved by Marin's voters in November 2004.

In some cases the guards will be at new locations, and in others the TAM guards will replace those provided by the schools, freeing dollars for other school needs.

The new program, contracted out to the crossing-guard company All City Management Services, will ensure uniformity in the quality of crossing guards. All City Management Services runs crossing guard programs throughout California. It hires, trains, and supervises the guards and ensures that all positions are covered.

The coveted crossing guards were assigned to those intersections with the most need. "We looked at the busiest intersections with the greatest numbers of kids," explained Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director of the Transportation Authority of Marin. The program will be monitored over the year and evaluated for its effectiveness.

Sarina Haley of San Rafael wanted to get more involved in working with kids. "My son was in Kindergarten and I was volunteering in the school," she said. "When I heard about the crossing guard position, I thought this would be a great thing to do." Sarina's son goes to Venetia Valley Elementary School in San Rafael, but she will be positioned nearby at Laurel Dell School. She has already received a warm reception. "When the parents saw me out there they were so glad. Before, it took a while to cross the street because the drivers were not stopping. I feel very appreciated." Sarina has been trained to teach kids how to get across the street safely. "I have to instruct the kids to wait until I'm in the middle of the intersection and tell them that they have to look both ways," she said.

To find out the locations of the new crossing guards, go to TAM's website: [www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov).

## THIRD ANNUAL RIDE N' SEEK HIGHLIGHTS EARTH DAY

### Treasure Seekers Hit the Bike Path

Over 100 children and their parents took to the trails of Samuel P. Taylor Park on Earth Day 2006 for SR2S's third annual Ride n' Seek Rolling Treasure Hunt. The families spent the morning participating in habitat restoration in the park, led by the Marin Conservation Corps. Family workers received free lunches, courtesy of Good Earth Natural Foods of Fairfax. Then, many jumped on their bikes to play Ride n' Seek, a Rolling Treasure Hunt.

Traveling the old railroad right-of-way, they rode through the park learning about the natural and human history of the area. Through Park Service information boards, riders hunted for "treasures" of knowledge, such as the location of the old Paper Mill, how salmon spawn in the creek, species of flowers found in the park, the area's original land grants, and much more. A walking course was also available for those who did not have bikes or were with smaller children.

The event was highly popular, with participants excited about how much they learned. Several expressed their appreciation about discovering

the pathway, which is excellent for family outings.

The day capped off a six-week campaign promoting Earth Day activities in Marin Schools with partners Next Generation and Marin Conservation Corps. Safe Routes to Schools taught classes in 14 different schools, with assemblies, bicycle rodeos, and environmental classes such as Greenhouse in a Bottle and Family Mouse Behind the Wheel. More children will be walking and biking to school as a result of our efforts.



*Treasure Hunters figure learn about the salmon of Samuel P. Taylor Park. Photo by Wendi Kallins*

**Many thanks to the event sponsors who provided prizes:**

**The Marin Center  
Craig's Warehouse  
Discovery Museum  
Broken Drum  
Baskin Robbins  
The Mountain Play  
Debbie Does Desserts  
Blue Waters Kayak  
Road Runner Burrito  
Cinema West  
Fairfax Scoop**

**Thanks also to Good Earth for the lunches, and the Alternative Baking Company and Sun Flower Baking Company for providing healthy snacks for returning treasure seekers.**



# Frequent Rider Miles Scores Again

## Kids Win New Bikes Through Healthy Ways to School

Twenty-four schools participated in the Spring 2006 Frequent Rider Miles contest. The event, which encourages more walking, biking, transit or carpools to school, rewards students who choose these alternatives, giving them points for each trip. Every child who accumulates 20 points gets a reward, and a few lucky kids get their names drawn in the end-of-the-year raffle, winning new Trek bicycles and other valuable prizes.

The vast majority of schools reported that they noted an increase in the number of children walking and biking as a result of the contest, with a third of those reporting a significant increase.

"The students are motivated by the prizes," said Marcella Hauser of Laurel Dell School in San Rafael. "They really enjoy walking and riding to school. It's time with their parents, and fun being on their bikes."

"The contest seemed to be contagious," noticed Lisa Harris of Olive School in Novato. "In the first week, few participated. By the final week, we had more than doubled our numbers to 76 students."

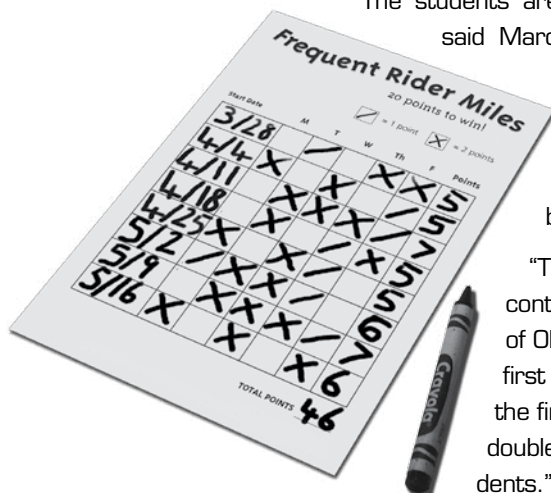
Steve Barrier of San Ramon School in Novato noted that the contest "increased the number of walkers and riders; participating kids were very excited about the chance to win prizes."

Perry King, Team Leader at Tam Valley in unincorporated Mill Valley and one of SR2S's original volunteers, said she was pleased to see the contest take root. "It encourages so many new walkers/riders and more carpoolers too. There were many new kindergarten walkers who were thrilled to be raffle winners!"

### Variations of the Contest

Most of the schools followed the general outline of the Frequent Rider Mile Contest. Some schools made their own variations, which provide a rich source of ideas for the future. Laurel Dell's team leader created charts for each classroom, and the teachers and students used those for the check-in rather than using the cards SR2S provides for recording trips to school. The leaders found that the in-class charts led to a big increase in participation because of the visibility.

At Venetia Valley School in San Rafael, a student council committee helped brainstorm and seek prizes for the contest. The committee members also helped create posters for the contest, and





Michael Schwartz, a third grader at Tam Valley School in Mill Valley, says his new Trek bike "is the best thing I ever won."



Patrick Brown, a 2nd grader at Brookside School in San Anselmo walks to school. "It's easy and fun," he says.



Moira Van DeWalker, now a 6th grader at White Hill Middle School in Fairfax, says, "When I ride to school I feel energized."

*Photos by Peter Oppenheimer*

visited each classroom to explain the contest and present the cards to their fellow students.

Redwood High School in Larkspur created a one-day event for Bike to School Day. It included a full day of valet bike parking provided by teachers, students and school administration. The event was publicized through student-made posters, the front door marquee, lunchtime announcements, and the school website.

## Students Link Contest to Science Lesson

Miller Creek Middle School in San Rafael developed its own contest, continuing on the theme of a series of lessons on global warming. SR2S staff helped student organizers and their instructor Mike Schulist design their own punch card to keep track of their trips. The card depicted a carbon-pollution monster, who would be "punched out" each time the student walked or biked to school. The card also provided information about how much pollution was kept from the air by each car-trip reduction.

On random days, cards of the Miller Creek students who walked or biked were validated by teachers using a specially shaped punch provided by SR2S. Fully punched cards were used as raffle tickets for

prizes, which had been chosen by student organizers. Teachers were educated about the event through inter-office memos, by the teacher coordinator and through the support of the principal. The contest was advertised by students, who did presentations in all of the science classes—an excellent way for them to practice public speaking. In the 2006-07 school year, the Miller Creek Pollution Punch Card will be offered as a second option that schools can use for the spring contest.

The Frequent Rider Miles contest has provided a tremendous boost in encouraging more children to walk and bike to school. The contest has been wildly popular with the children, many of whom look forward to it every year. The incentives, especially the bike prizes, catch their attention and create many new walkers and bikers. Safe Routes to Schools is deeply grateful to Trek Bicycles for its sponsorship of the contest over the last four years. We are now looking for a new sponsor or group of sponsors for the Spring 2007 contest.



# "FATHER KNOWS BEST"



*Kevis Halphen and his daughter Karina love to bike to school together. Photo courtesy of Kevis Halphen*

## Katrina Transplants Learn the Joys of Biking to School

by Frances Barbour, Sun Valley Team leader and Safe Routes Instructor

Kevis Halphen and his family of six live in a beautiful house in what some realtors call the "Father Knows Best neighborhood" of Sun Valley in San Rafael. He admits he's a lucky man. Just a year ago he and his family were refugees of Hurricane Katrina, living in a homeless shelter in San Rafael. They had evacuated out of New Orleans for the last time and turned to a new life in Northern California. Now Kevis' three youngest children attend Sun Valley School, and the lovely house they are renting is just a few blocks away.

Because his wife commutes early to her job in Mill Valley, Kevis is in charge of the morning school routine. The kids wake up at about seven o'clock and eat breakfast in their pajamas, then by 7:30 set off to complete their "personal hygiene," a regimented list their father keeps posted on the wall in case any one of them is half-asleep and wonders what's next. At 8:05 all of the kids are dressed and Kevis performs backpack inspections.

## And They're Off

By 8:15, the family is ready—and genuinely excited about their commute to school. They enter the garage and hop onto their four bikes, most of which were donated to them when they first arrived. Few local families have done such justice to a gift of bikes! Rain or shine, the happy quartet pedals the 10-minute route to school. Sons Chris, 8, and Kevis Jr., almost 7, dart off ahead. Daughter Karina, almost 6 and having just graduated from the Trail-a-bike, lingers back, still mastering her new bike. They proceed up the new sidewalk on 5th Avenue, and if they encounter pedestrians (not many on the rainy days!) they move to the road and stay on the right side, passing the seemingly stationary wall of cars that are waiting to turn into the school and polluting the area with their exhaust and noise.

It wasn't long after Kevis moved into the neighborhood that he realized that both walking and biking to Sun Valley School were faster modes than driving, given those last few blocks of car traffic. At first he was one of those parents in the line of cars, but maybe because he is making a fresh start here, he did not embrace the status quo and instead decided to get out of the "shell" and into the fresh air every day, rain or shine.

Do the kids like biking? "Are you kidding?" Kevis says. "We walked today, and my son looked as if his best friend had died, he was so bummed. In fact I've found the privilege of cycling to school has become quite an effective behavior modification tool, a great motivator for them to do their chores and homework."

## Healthy Choices

Kevis has learned and has taught his family about healthy choices and lifestyles. Approaching 50, he consulted his doctor, who advised him to improve his diet and exercise habits. He started reading the nutrition labels on packaging, and now his kids do it too. "My wife says she won't take them grocery shopping anymore. They caution her about how many grams of fat or how much sodium is in her favorite foods. I can't think about eating a candy bar in front of them!" he adds, shaking his head.

"I started using the bike to go everywhere, and now my doctor says my health (cholesterol) has improved tremendously. My kids love exercise too. I have to stay fit to keep up with my young family. I'm also trying to get my wife involved. I bought her a bike, and am looking forward to her riding with us."

Kevis sees his commute on bike as an investment of both time and energy to ensure a healthy lifestyle. He now works independently, as a door-to-door mechanic, so he can arrange his own hours and help his children with schoolwork (and help maintain the fleet of bikes!). He also loves motorcycles, and says that bicycles are the next best thing: "Anything on two wheels gives you that open-air experience." At one point in his career he was a Child Development Administrator for the San Francisco Unified School District, so he understands the value of his time and energy as an active parent. In so many ways Kevis Halphen is very fortunate, and so are his family and his neighborhood.

# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS OFFERS NEW TEEN PROGRAM

## Youth Involvement is Key

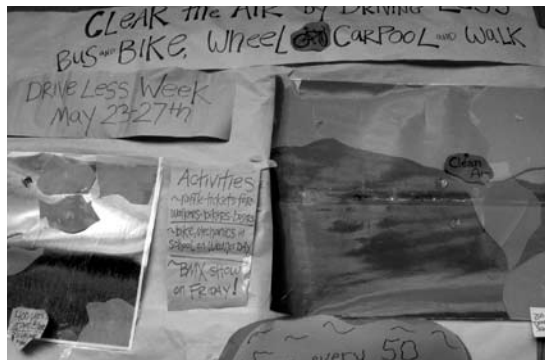
Safe Routes to Schools has created a comprehensive youth-involvement program, including a series of new classes aimed specifically at teens. The program will be offered to middle schools and high schools throughout Marin. Safe Routes leaders will work with youth so that they themselves can formulate and lead their own efforts to promote alternative modes of transportation.

New classes will help students employ critical-thinking skills as they make choices about how to travel. A class using a Student Travel Diary is geared towards 8th graders. Students will keep a week-long diary of their travels, and will receive tools to help themselves replace car trips with other choices. The Bicycle/Transit Field Trip Curriculum will help students learn how to plan a bicycle and/or transit trip using references and guidebooks, and then enjoy the fruits of their labors by taking the trip.

## High Schools Too

A similar, but more sophisticated, Field Trip Curriculum will be offered to high school students. In addition, a high-school class called "Transportation, Retrospective, Prospective" will teach students about the rise of our current transportation system, and the new opportunities coming to Marin.

SR2S is also offering an internship program at the high school level. Student interns at each school will get assistance in learning public speaking and event planning, and will interact with the interns from the other participating high schools in Marin.



Miller Creek Students created a bulletin board to promote walking and biking to school. Photo by Melanie Grubman.

## Three School Districts Awarded Safe Routes to Schools Grants

[CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE]



Lakeside Drive in Corte Madera near Neil Cummins School will be easier to cross thanks to a Caltrans grant awarded last summer. Photo by David Parisi

In addition, the grant will help improve a multi-use pathway on Vineyard Road near Pleasant Valley School, alleviating uneven sidewalks and improving street crossings for children walking to school.

"All the participants—the parents, the schools and the City—are ecstatic over the decision by the State to fund our project for signage and marking improvements around SR2S participating schools here in Novato," said Glenn Young, Novato's Director of Public Works. "We thank TAM's Safe Routes to Schools' Wendi Kallins and David Parisi for their work to help make our school travel zones safer for pedestrians and bicyclists."

## Neil Cummins Improves Pathway

Neil Cummins School in Corte Madera has a multi-use path leading to the school all the way from Larkspur, but there's a tricky gap. When children come to the end of the creekside path at Lakeside Drive, there's no clear connection to the path's continuation on the opposite corner. The Town of Corte Madera will use part of its \$104,000 grant to extend the curbs along a segment of Lakeside Drive and create a mid-block crosswalk. "Over the years, many parents have expressed to me their understandable concerns about the safety of crossing Lakeside," said Neil Cummins Team Leader Tasmin Pessa. "I am thrilled that a crosswalk is being provided for pedestrian and cyclist safety for this very popular route."

Corte Madera will also use its grant funds to install school-area warning signs and pavement markings in the vicinity of five schools, including Neil Cummins and schools along Paradise Drive: Allaire, Marin Country Day, Montessori, and San Clemente.

The City of San Rafael was awarded a \$159,000 grant to improve conditions near San Rafael High School by constructing sidewalk gap closures and curb ramps, and installing crosswalks and speed-feedback signs on Mission Street between Union Avenue and Belle Avenue.

The Safe Routes to Schools program assisted each of these communities in preparing the grant applications and organizing community participation. This TAM program organizes community task forces to evaluate physical environments and create traffic safety campaigns. The resulting Travel Plans map out the strategies that will be used to encourage more students to walk or bike to school.

## CALENDAR

### OCTOBER IS WALKTOBER MONTH!

**2-6** – International  
Walk to School Week

**4** – International Walk  
to school Day

**5** – Team Leader  
Luncheon 11:30 a.m.  
Strawberry Recreation  
Center

**11** – Reed Task Force  
Meeting 9 a.m. Reed  
School District Office

**11** – Novato Task  
Force Meeting 7 p.m.  
Margaret Todd Senior  
Center

**17** – Mill Valley Task  
Force Meeting 9 a.m.  
(location TBA)

Ross Valley Task  
Force meeting  
October date and  
location TBA

### JANUARY

San Rafael Task Force  
launch

## COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF SR2S PROGRAM AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Earlier this year, TAM provided a comprehensive survey, via hard copy and the Internet, to parents at schools participating in the Safe Routes to Schools program. Parents of almost 500 students responded, allowing TAM, SR2S



staff and others to understand the background of the respondents and their children, identify current travel modes to and from schools and the potential for change, evaluate the current SR2S program and consider ways to improve it.

In addition to the survey, TAM conducted a review of "best practices" used in SR2S efforts by other communities in the U.S., Canada and Britain. The intent of the peer review was to identify additional ways of improving Marin's program.

Based on the survey and review of other successful programs, TAM will be introducing new tools to Marin's SR2S program over time. Please look soon on TAM's website, [www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov), for the comprehensive report.

## TRAVEL PLAN: [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2]

One of those improvements will need to be in the behavior of drivers. TAM has purchased from the City of San Jose the award-winning Street Smarts Campaign. This kit includes workshop presentations for school and neighborhood groups, and has proven highly effective in reducing accidents in San Jose.

Much of the information required for Marin County's School Travel Plans has already been collected by the Safe Routes to Schools program over the last six years. Many schools have done parent surveys and conducted walkabouts to inspect routes, and the SR2S engineering team has developed design-improvement recommendations. This information will be translated into implementation plans to ensure that the recommendations move through the process, receive funding, and are implemented.

To find out how to join a Safe Routes to Schools Task Force in your community, call 488-4101.

Measure A, Marin's half-cent transportation sales tax, provides funding for Safe Routes to School programs in all Marin schools. If your school is not currently participating, please see the TAM web site, [www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov),

or contact [wendi@marinbike.org](mailto:wendi@marinbike.org) to learn how you can join the program.



Marin's Transportation Sales Tax



**SAFE ROUTES  
TO SCHOOLS**  
MARIN COUNTY

A program of the Transportation Authority of Marin

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